

Transition Timeline for Children and Adolescents with Special Health Care Needs

Children and families experience many transitions, large and small, over the years. Three predictable transitions occur: when children reach school age, when they approach adolescence, and when children move from adolescence into adulthood. Other transitions children make include moving into new programs, working with new agencies and care providers, and making new friends. Transitions involve changes: adding new expectations, responsibilities, or resources, and letting go of others.

As a parent of a child with special health care needs you may be caught up in day to day survival. You may ask, "How can I think about tomorrow when I'm just trying to make it through today?" But when those moments come when you can catch your breath it may be helpful to be aware of those transitions and allow yourself to think about the future.

The Transition Timeline for Children and Adolescents with Special Health Care Needs may help you think about the future. We hope this timeline will give you ideas to help your child achieve independence in their own health care and other areas of life as he/she grows.

Transition Timeline for Children and Adolescents with Special Health Care Needs

Parent and Child Interactions that Encourage Independence

- By ages 3-5, or according to your child's ability
 - Assign your child chores appropriate for their ability level.
 - Begin teaching your child about their special health care need.
 - Begin teaching your child self-care skills; normal skills and those related to their special health care need.
- By ages 6-11, or according to your child's developmental ability
 - Begin helping your child interact directly with doctors, nurses, therapists.
 - Assess your child's perception and basic knowledge of his/her special health care need. Build on their understanding.
 - Continue teaching your child normal self-care skills as well as skills related to their special health care need.
 - Encourage hobbies and leisure activities.
 - Encourage decision making skills by offering choices to your child.
 - Continue assigning your child chores appropriate for their ability level.
 - Take your child shopping whenever possible so he or she can help in choices.
 - Let your child choose how to spend some or all of allowance.
 - Teach your child the consequences of their behaviors and choices.
 - Allow your child to experience the consequences of a poor choice as well as a good choice.
 - Take your child to visit your place of work.
 - Begin asking your child "What will you do when you grow up?"

By ages 12-18, or according to your child's developmental ability

- Assess your teen's perception and basic knowledge of his/her special health care need. Fill in gaps in understanding.
- Continue teaching your teen normal self-help skills as well as skills related to special health care need.
- Begin helping your teen keep a record of his/her medical history, including conditions, operations, treatments (dates, doctors, recommendations).
- Begin helping your teen take responsibility for making and keeping their own medical appointments, ordering their own supplies, etc.
- Begin exploring health care financing for young adult.
- Discuss sexuality with your teen.
- Help your teen identify and build on their strengths.
- Explore support groups, if teen is interested.
- Begin to explore and talk about possible career interests with your teen.
- Help your teen find work and volunteer activities.
- Continue to allow your teen to help with family chores.
- Continue to encourage hobbies and leisure activities.
- Help your teen identify and be involved with adult or older teen role models.
- Begin, with your teen, looking for an adult health care provider.

By ages 18-21, or according to your child's developmental ability

- Act as a resource and support to your young adult.
- Encourage your young adult to participate in support groups and/or organizations relevant to their special health care need.
- Finalize health care financing with your young adult.
- With your young adult, finalize transfer of medical care to adult provider.

Services or Contacts Needed for Successful Transition to Adulthood:

- By age 16
 - Transition Plan (School) in place for teens on IEPs
- By age 17
 - Begin exploring health care financing for young adult.
- Notify Vocational Rehabilitation for teens with and without IEPs by the beginning of their last school year.
- If appropriate begin guardianship procedures 2 months before the teen turns 18.
- By age 18
 - Check eligibility for SSI the month the teen turns 18.
- By Age 21
 - For young adults with developmental disabilities, notify DDD for adult services the year the young adult turns 21.

Possible Resources and Contacts to Consider

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN)
Parent to Parent
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children

Parents are Vital in Education (PAVE)
Special Education Parent/Professional Advisory Councils (SEPPAC)
ARC (organization dedicated to the welfare of children and adults with developmental disabilities)

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
SSI for Adults
DDD for Adults

Transition Toward
Preschool
School

Transition Toward
Adolescence

Transition Toward Adulthood and Post School Options

Post School Program: Special Ed/Supported employment
Employment
Post Secondary education (2 or 4 year college or vocational school)

